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Twin Cities Gay Men's Chorus in 2010. Photo by Paul Nixdorf

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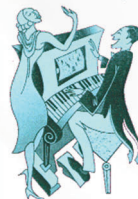
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On Friendship



As I write, it's hard to turn my thoughts to anything other than the tragedy unfolding in Japan following last week's 8.9 earthquake, and the ensuing tsunami crashing over that country's northern territories.

Hard, too, to say anything that will make a difference. Oh, it's important for Americans to provide aid, and to offer prayers of whatever sort for those citizens bereft of homes and loved ones. But one really can *do* nothing in the face of what to the Earth is a shrug of its mantle and a wrinkling of its surface waters.

Two weeks ago, when I was on the West Coast, I met a young Japanese woman who had come to visit a mutual friend for a few weeks. After I returned to Minneapolis, I received a note that said she had become homesick, and had insisted on flying back to Japan. I've not yet learned her status, though her mom, who also was coming for a visit, is still in California, separated from her child.

I have no solutions or anodyne thoughts on the tsunami tragedy, or the myriad others one sees daily in our nonstop media deluge.

However, I do find invitations to "vote on these photos" despicable, as though the ruin of tens of thousands of lives is open to voyeurs to select the most wretched.

The tragedy has started me to thinking about the very reason I flew out to California in the first place: friendship, and the chance to see two friends of long standing. I spent 10 days with them, enjoying conversation and catch-up, Dim Sum, wine-tasting, and drives along the coast to photograph the waves.

I have no close family—my friends are my family. While our inner bonds are strong, the outer world—politics, the ravages of nature and of aging—will sever them in time, at least on this plane.

I remember, as I contemplate the current photos of this faraway devastation, that my friends share a concern for me (and I for them). They will call if they haven't heard from me in a while, and continue to care even in times of hardship.

Despite the Facebook counts and competitions for longest list, relatively few throughout a given life are truly *friends*. It's a good thing to keep that in mind day to day. Make a call, or an invitation to get together. Tell them you care. **E.B. BOATNER**

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Corley Is Minnesota AIDS Project Interim Executive Director



KATHLEEN H. CORLEY steps into the position of Minnesota AIDS Project (MAP) Interim Executive Director on March 28. She will oversee operations of the agency, plus assist the Board of Directors as it searches for a new Executive Director. She brings to the organization a broad-based understanding of nonprofit operations, particularly in times of transition.



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ExtraABBAanza Concert in 2010. Photo by Paul Nixdorf

Twin Cities GAY MEN'S CHORUS

Celebrates Three Fabulous Decades

The Twin Cities Gay Men's Chorus turns 30 this year, but who's counting? Most important, beneath the numbers—the thousands of practice hours, the hundreds of concerts, the tens of years—lies the human bedrock: those who sing and those who embrace their song.

Gregory Wallin, a 10-year chorus member, recalls, "I attended the very first Twin Cities Men's Chorus ['gay' was introduced in 1991] in concert at Heritage Hall in the Downtown Minneapolis Public Library in the spring of 1981 with my friend, David. We were inspired enough to want to join, and mustered up the nerve to audition by going together. Larry Whitely was the director, and after my audition,



Twin Cities Gay Men's Chorus in 1981 before "gay" was added to its name in 1991.
Photo Courtesy of TCGMC

he said he needed basses. I said that was fine, and I was a member.”

Now, the Twin Cities *Gay* Men's Chorus (TCGMC) celebrates its 30th anniversary with the April 1-2 *Olé! Olé! Olé!* Concert, together with Ballet Folklórico México Azteca and Mariachi Mi Tierra, groups dedicated to the performance and preservation of traditional Mexican folk dance.

TCGMC Artistic Director Stan Hill notes, “This concert is garnering relationships with Twin Cities communities we have never reached before. Expanding on the original show commissioned by the Seattle Men's Chorus, we are offering repertoire that goes be-

yond the pop genres, affording a look at significant Latino composers such as Villa-Lobos, Aguiar, Favero, and Suchar.”

Hill, TCGMC's fifth director, who has led the group for 11 years, will be retiring in July 2012.

As Hill shares, his hope is that the chorus will “continue to explore and address issues that are relevant to them and the community at large.”

TCGMC no doubt will continue to touch lives both on and off the stage, as it has in the past.

Wallin says, “Going onstage as an openly-gay chorus was always empowering. Our first out-of-town concert was April 1984 in Chicago, where we performed with the Windy City Gay Men's Chorus [*Together Again for the First Time*].”

For Wallin, “The highlight of it all was the weeklong GALA [Gay and Lesbian Association of Choruses] II celebration in July 1986. We hosted the international event with groups from Canada, Seattle, Dallas, Denver, San Francisco, New York, Chicago, and others—some 2,000 singers.

“Individual choruses were featured each evening at Orchestra Hall, and for the finale, the combined choruses performed under the direction of Philip Brunelle with a stirring rendition of ‘A Testament to Freedom,’ with text from Thomas Jefferson—2,000 gay/lesbian voices singing, ‘The God who gave us life, gave us liberty, at the same time.’ At the end, the audience wouldn't stop applauding and cheering, so Dr. Brunelle turned back to us, and mouthed, ‘Start again!’”

Many audience members have responded with more than applause, among them Alan Braun, a staunch friend and financial supporter of the chorus.

As Braun explains, “I came out in 1984, and a new friend suggested we go to the chorus concert. I was totally amazed that such a group existed, as well as by the talent and entertainment they provided. It opened a new world for me, and I quickly became a financial supporter of the chorus.”

Braun is quick to illustrate the important role of TCGMC outreach in building community: “Having commissioned ‘Through A Glass Darkly’ [March 2008], I traveled with the chorus to all its performances, from Miami to Ashland, Wisconsin.”

Of the latter city, Braun relates, “At one point, I looked to my right, and saw a woman in her 40s in tears—it was obvious her life had ➔



Wedding of Dean Genth and Gary Swenson, May 31, 2009, Mason City Iowa. (In front, from left) Reverend Dr. Mel White, Dean Genth, Gary Swenson, TCGMC Artistic Director Stan Hill. Photo by Gary Peterson



Chorus members at the Des Moines Outreach Concert in 1985. Photo Courtesy of TCGMC.



TCGMC at the St. Paul Winter Carnival Ice Palace in 1986. Photo Courtesy of TCGMC

been impacted by addiction, and it was emotionally hitting home. I looked to my left, and saw three 60-plus women who were literally dancing in their seats to the beat of the music. What a contrast!”

Hill stresses that a primary aim of the chorus is “to put it very simply, to defuse stereotypes.”

This process works both ways, as was demonstrated during TCGMC’s extensive Great Southern Sing-Out Tour (2006), including performances in Nashville, Tennessee, at the Grand Ole Opry; Birmingham, Alabama; Jackson, Mississippi; Mobile, Alabama; and New Orleans, Louisiana.

Hill reports, “The men of the chorus felt that we could best live up to our Mission Statement of ‘Gay Men Building Community Through Music’ by [confronting] our own stereotypes and fears of the Deep South, by going there and singing.”

Closer to home, Hill describes a chorus performance in the Rotunda at the Mall of America. One family—Mom, Dad, and three children—listened intently to the entire 45-minute set. When Hill took questions from the audience, the mother politely inquired, “How is it that all the gay men in America are here in Minneapolis?” After his explanation that the local chorus was only one of 120 GALA choruses, the father mused, “Well, I didn’t know they could sing *low*, too.”

Outreach, groundbreaking, and celebration merged gloriously in May 31, 2009, at the wedding of Dean Genth and Gary Swenson in “The Music Man Square” in Mason City, Iowa.

These excerpts are drawn from the couple’s wedding program: “Dean and Gary found themselves on the campus of St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota. As they walked along...they saw a sign that read: ‘Gay Men’s Chorus Concert, tonight in the chapel.’ That evening, Dean and Gary, feeling as if they were the only gay couple in all of the rural Midwest, timidly entered the chapel, and saw 100 members of the Twin Cities Gay Men’s Chorus....Hundreds of people came in, young, old, gay couples, straight couples, all smiling, welcoming, and happy. It was an epiphany....They weren’t alone. For the first time, they held hands in public.”

Genth and Swenson became chorus supporters. When the Iowa Supreme Court ruling of April 3, 2009, allowed same-sex marriage, the two invited the chorus to sing at their wedding. And sing it did, 40-strong, led by Hill.

The couple’s program continues, “The Twin Cities Gay Men’s Chorus ends every concert with their signature song, ‘Walk Hand In Hand.’ As Dean and Gary held hands with each other...the choir and audience sang together words that would forever change the hopes

and dreams of two frightened men from Iowa.”

Hill remarks, “We felt it was very affirming to be able to do in Iowa what we could not do in Minnesota. We were able to defuse stereotypes, not only through good singing, but by offering relatively rural individuals their first look at the gay community in numbers they may not have encountered before.”

TCGMC offers a home to all, even to relative “newbies” like Ryan Mayer, who moved here with his boyfriend in 2010, but knew few people locally. Bars and the Internet weren’t the solution. Spotting the chorus website, Mayer sent a note to Hill.

Mayer recounts that he “got a prompt response with details about auditions. I rehearsed an audition song, and went, although I almost chickened out. Thanks to the friendly and nerve-calming guys at the audition, I managed to make it through the audition.

“Being a chorus member has allowed me to meet some great guys, and make some great friends I might have never met outside the chorus. We actually were discussing this [recently], and we all agreed that if it weren’t for the chorus’s diversity of ages and personalities, many of us might never have met.”

Dr. Jan Meyer, a 30-year friend of the chorus, remembers, “I think I read an obscure item in a newspaper about a new group called the Twin Cities Men’s Chorus. Because I love music, I went to hear them, and, of course, was immediately sold!

“I became a donor first, as soon as the group asked, and also a season subscriber soon thereafter. I don’t believe I’ve missed a year for making a donation since its second year of existence, even when I lived in Chicago and Nebraska.”

Looking to the future, Meyer concedes, “Dr. Stan Hill is going to be a hard act to follow,” but she is sure of one thing: “Sometime in the time frame of 10 to 30 years, I expect at least part of the chorus to sing two selections at my memorial service. I don’t have the date yet, but I have picked the songs. Of course, “Hand in Hand” is one. The second is “American Hymn,” performed back when the Livingston Theatre in St. Paul was [the chorus’s] performance home.”

As a sort of exchange,” Meyer reveals pointedly, “I have been generous to the chorus in my will.” **E.B. BOATNER**

Olé! Olé! Olé!

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SPINNING Straub INTO GOLD

by Heidi Fellner



When spring arrives in Milan, I imagine its entrance must be sudden and exuberant to inspire the looks one usually sees in *Vogue*. But something must happen to our fairest season as she ventures deep into our imposing continent. When she finally arrives here, she is demure, tentative. Though fashion designers everywhere must kowtow to international trend forecasters, this season's predictions must have been inspired by someplace like home. Delicate details, muted colors, and youthful silhouettes are this year's spring.

Shakopee-based designer Christopher Straub's collection takes cues from trend forecasters, but his spring collection is all his own.

Straub says, "It's definitely inspired by a garden, so lots of lush greens and char-treuse, mixed with grays, whites, and purples."

While forecasters also help determine which fabrics are available, Straub opted instead to create his own prints from photos of hydrangeas, which are especially meaningful to him at this point in his design career.

Straub shares, "There are these tiny little flowers, but they make up this entity. And that's a recurring theme in my fashion—these textural elements. With this collection, I've incorporated actual created texture and printed texture, and that's something I haven't done before."

Interestingly, Straub designed his spring collection as most established designers do outside of Minnesota—in the fall of the previous year.

Straub states, "That's how the fashion world works, and it's funny how Minnesota doesn't get that. At this fall fashion thing last November, I was the only one showing spring. Everyone else was just showing fall. I had to call it a preview!"

I'm not sure how one could get spring inspiration when our morbid Minnesotan

autumn is upon us, and more precisely, how one could forecast a trend that will gel so precisely with the collective international mood.

Straub puts it this way: "The reality is, history repeats itself. So, within how many years, we should be out of a recession, and back into more joyous prints and luxury."

Perhaps, then, the earliest predictor of economic recovery isn't the housing sector or unemployment percentages. Look instead for full skirts, fuchsia, and feathers.

Straub speaks very eloquently about his industry. It's almost enough to make one forget that only a few years back, he was just another contestant on *Project Runway*.

Before that, Straub was selling custom-made underwear sewn from recycled T-shirts. When he has a booth at the Twin Cities Pride Festival now, he often has people coming up to him to report on *that other guy* they bought a similar pair of underwear from.

Straub exclaims, "You just didn't know who I was back then! A lot of people do own a one-of-a-kind Christopher Straub, but they only paid \$25 for it back when they didn't know this guy was going to go somewhere."

To be fair, it has been a fast transition. Straub now officially has "made it"—with his own Wikipedia page, and all the responsibility and fact-correcting that comes with it.

Straub laughs, "Some people will put things like: 'Christopher was on *Project Runway* and has a stupid beard.' And that was, like, my favorite thing on there."

According to Straub, the page is currently pretty accurate—for Wikipedia. It leaves out, however, what probably has made him so successful. For example, many contestants who placed higher than Straub have very little in the way of a career to show for it. In addition to his talent and creativity, his

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desire to seize any and all opportunities that present themselves has made all the difference.

Straub relates, "I actually thought after the show I would be approached by different stores and different celebrities, and that doesn't happen. You have to get out there, and you have to make your own name after the show, and put yourself out there actively."

Then, when Straub was 12, his father passed away. Straub's family began having difficulties paying the bills, so he started working at 14 to help make ends meet. However, his father had been a bit of a tinkerer, and enjoyed owning all sorts of tools—a sewing machine included. It probably was intended for minor repairs, but Straub fixed it up, and started playing around with it in his spare time. Sewing became addictive immediately.

Straub recalls, "I couldn't get enough of it. I just needed to. It was my drug of choice—acquiring fabric."

But Straub's hardships weren't entirely over when he graduated, and left home. In his early 20s, for example, he was homeless for six weeks while he fought to keep himself afloat. His roommate hadn't been paying his share of the rent, so Straub was kicked out of their apartment. He didn't have enough money to rent his own place. Staying with family members wasn't an option, either, so he moved into a warehouse where he was working, and held multiple jobs until he could get back on his feet.

Straub remarks, "It was an interesting time in my life when it was just surviving. That was literally all I was doing. I wasn't creating a business. I wasn't creating a brand. It was strictly trying to make it day by day. I think I showered two times in that six weeks. That's clearly not something I'm proud of, but it's not something I'm ashamed of, either, because it changes you."

It's little wonder that the highly-stressful *Project Runway* experience only fueled Straub's drive. During the show, he took care to answer every e-mail he received from fans, even when his inbox swelled to 800 messages. His dedication paid off.

Straub points out, "Some of those early people I talked to brought me into whatever hometown they're from to be a part of a benefit, or design a product for a company."

But Straub does have one request of his fans: "People follow me around at the Mall of America with an iPhone camera. It doesn't bother me, but I would rather meet you, and shake your hand, and take a picture *with* you."

If you'd like to meet Straub, rather than stalking him at the mall, he currently is planning a benefit fashion show in the fall. It also may be easier to purchase his designs very soon. He was coy, but did tell *Lavender* he is working with a major retailer right now, and hopes to have apparel in stores in either late 2011 or early 2012.

We hope to touch base with Straub down the road as well.

For more information about Straub's upcoming appearances and fashion events, or where to purchase his pieces, visit <www.christopherstraub.com>.

So, after the show, Straub immediately designed a line of playful accessories, and now is hawking them on ShopNBC. He also has parlayed some of his out-of-the-box challenge experience into working the home-and-garden trade-show circuit, where he creates a wearable look from supplies purchased at Home Depot.

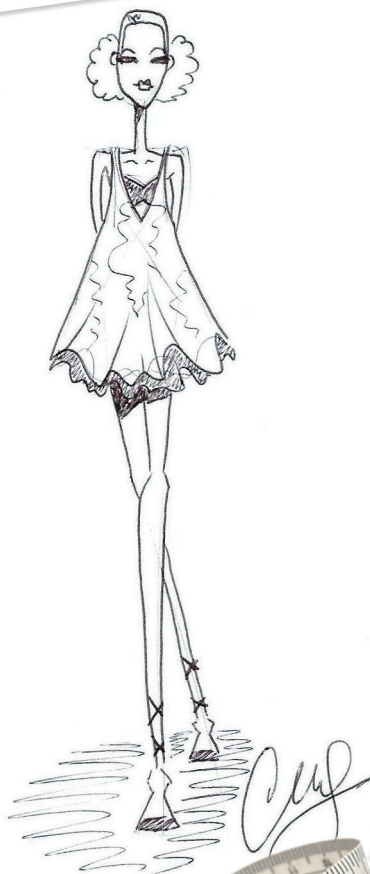
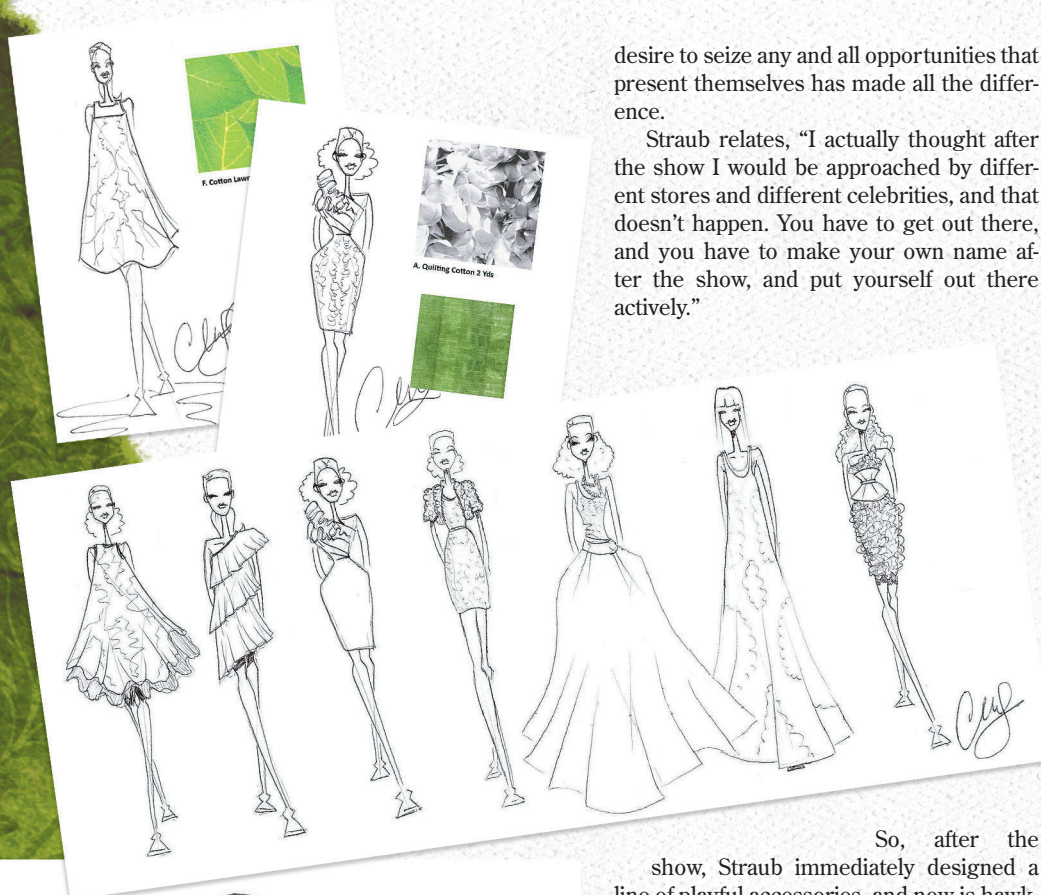
Straub declares, "I could make crazy dresses for the rest of my life. I love it. I was on *The Rachel Ray Show*, and I made a dress of lettuce and kale or something. I even made a dress out of Cambria countertop. It weighed 63 pounds."

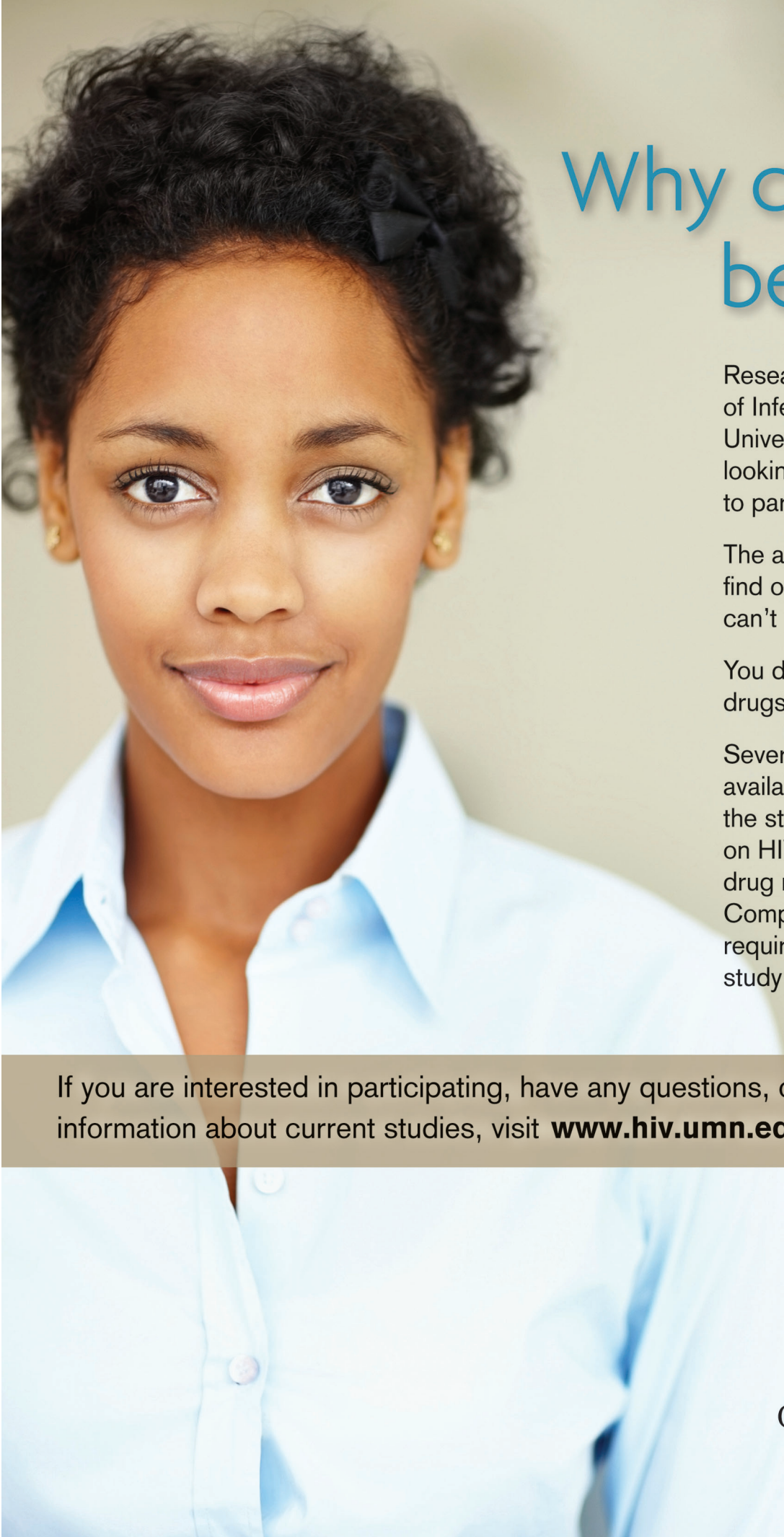
His intense drive was forged long before Straub's appearance on *Project Runway*. One might think growing up in the Edina school system would be a nurturing atmosphere for young artists, and to hear him talk about that, it definitely was, but only ironically.

Straub notes, "I've always been an artist since early, early on, and I was often ridiculed for it, and kind of felt separate in school from everyone else."

But Straub's feeling of isolation only deepened as the years went by.

Straub recounts, "I almost felt like I thrived more as an isolated artist. It was more like, I don't care what you feel. I'm going to do what I want anyway."





Why can't HIV be cured?

Researchers from the Division of Infectious Diseases at the University of Minnesota are looking for HIV+ and HIV- people to participate in research studies.

The aim of these studies is to find out why HIV persists and can't be cured with HIV drugs.

You do not need to be on HIV drugs to qualify.

Several opportunities are available and depending upon the study, you may be started on HIV drugs or your current drug regimen may be adjusted. Compensation and time requirements vary based on the study for which you may qualify.

If you are interested in participating, have any questions, or would like more information about current studies, visit **www.hiv.umn.edu** or call **612-625-7472**



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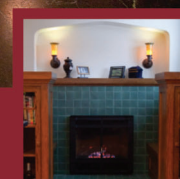
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BIG GAY NEWS



LOCAL

JUDGE DISMISSES CHALLENGE TO SAME-SEX MARRIAGE BARRIERS

The *Star Tribune* reports that in early March, Hennepin County District Court Judge Mary Dufresne dismissed a lawsuit that challenged legal barriers to same-sex marriage in Minnesota. She wrote in her opinion that “unless and until” the Minnesota Supreme Court overrules a 1971 decision limiting marriage to a man and a woman, or repeals the state Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), “same-sex marriage will not exist in this state.”

NATIONAL

US HOUSE COUNTERS OBAMA ADMINISTRATION BY DEFENDING DOMA

According to Agence France-Presse, the US House Bipartisan Legal Advisory Group, made up of three Republicans and two Democrats, voted along party lines in early March to defend in court the federal ban on same-sex marriage, the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). Republican House Speaker John Boehner said in a statement, “This action by the House will ensure that this law’s constitutionality is decided by the courts, rather than by the President unilaterally.” The vote came after the Obama Administration announced it no longer would defend key parts of DOMA in court.

PROP 8 SPONSORS OPPOSE LIFTING SAME-SEX MARRIAGE BAN

The Associated Press reports that attorneys for the sponsors of California’s Proposition 8, which banned same-sex marriage in the state, are asking the 9th US Circuit Court of Appeals to keep the measure in place while considering its constitutionality. Plaintiffs in the case are requesting that the court let same-sex marriages resume in California while it hears the appeal. **WRITTEN & COMPILED BY BRADLEY TRAYNOR**

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OUTFRONT



WISCONSIN BEARS

Rainbow Families Conference Features Jamie Nabozny

In response to prominent suicides of GLBT students in Anoka County and Hennepin County, as well as nationwide, the local branch of the national Family Equality Council (FEC) has made bullying the focus of its 16th-annual Rainbow Families Conference on April 9 in Minneapolis.

According to Mel Rexroad, FEC Midwest Region Senior Manager, the event will be a time for current and prospective GLBT families, local educators, and allies to have fun and make friends, while bullying, an issue many GLBT youth face every day, is addressed through workshops and speakers.

The keynote speaker of the conference, Jamie Nabozny, endured extensive ridicule and physical abuse for several years in school for being gay. One assault left him with severe abdominal injuries that required surgery.

Nabozny has fought to prevent other youth from being subjected to such harassment, especially those students targeted for their sexual orientation. He, along with Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, won a landmark federal lawsuit guaranteeing every student, regardless of sexual orientation, a safe school experience.

At the beginning of the conference, Nabozny will speak. *Bullied*, a documentary depicting his life, will be shown in a workshop.

Rexroad stated that she expects Nabozny's story will show a poignant example of bullying in public schools, and will demonstrate what can be done, both locally and at a federal level, to combat it.

Tammy Aaberg, mother of Justin Aaberg of Anoka High School, who took his own life in July 2010 after prolonged bullying from peers for being gay, will receive the Community Hero Award at the conference for her efforts to change bullying policies of local public schools.

Rexroad said she hopes the conference

will equip attendees with information on bullying, and encourage others to "be proactive. Teach younger kids about bullying, so they'll understand when that's happening, and how



Jamie Nabozny. Photo by Sophia Hantzes

to be inclusive rather than exclusive."

The event will allow many families to make connections with the GLBT community; attend educational workshops on topics from surrogacy to financial planning; and explore other resources available to GLBT families.

As Rexroad noted, for many of those who attend, it is the only event where they get to meet with other same-sex families, clarifying, "A lot of it we want to be social. We really want people to come and have a good time, see their friends, and learn a little along the way."

Rexroad, who has 4-year-old twins, a boy and a girl, started full-time work with FEC locally in September 2010.

For Rexroad, FEC's goals are consistent with her values: "I really believe in what FEC does: promoting equality for all our families. I want our kids to grow up in an inclusive society, where people aren't bullied for being different."

FEC is a national organization that focuses on GLBT families, and works closely with policies to advance GLBT equality, including the Student Nondiscrimination Act, the Safe Schools Improvement Act, and the Every Child Deserves a Family Act. It seeks to end discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity at a federal level.

In Washington, DC, FEC staff supports and pursues the needs of GLBT families, within the scope of GLBT rights addressed in legislatures. It promotes initiatives as well as the work of other influential GLBT advocacy groups, with the ultimate goal of equality and inclusivity for families across the country, regardless of makeup.

Rexroad expressed excitement for a new element of the conference: a story booth, which will take video, audio, and pictures of parents, their children, and others. She hopes it will give attendees a chance to tell their story, and share what they would like to do at future conferences.

Children ages 8 and under will have story time, crafts, activities by My Gym of Eden Prairie, and more. CLIMB Theatre, COLAGE (Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere), and others will host programs for kids ages 9 to 18.

The conference requires registration and a fee to participate. Rexroad expects 500 attendees, including 150 kids, in addition to 70 volunteers and 30 paid teachers.

For information on the conference, including registration and volunteer opportunities, visit <www.familyequality.org/conference>. KAITLYN E. WALSH

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THE STORY OF ANDREW WILFAHRT

One morning a couple weeks back, I stood at the bathroom mirror, mindlessly engaged in my morning ablutions. I love that word. Please use it in a sentence at some point in your day.

Anyway, there I stood, brushing my teeth, slowly entering consciousness, as the unruffled voice of Minnesota Public Radio calmly told me of the day's news. I always listen to MPR in the morning. It's kind of like a good friend. And, like a good friend, half the time, I'm not even listening to it, but its mere presence comforts me nonetheless. As often happens, a certain story will grab my attention, and bring me back to the land of the living.

This particular morning, it was the tale of a Minnesota soldier killed in Afghanistan, 31-year-old Corporal Andrew Wilfahrt of Rosemount. He died after his patrol was attacked with an improvised explosive device. Politics and Afghanistan policy aside, nothing brings home the reality of war like the death of someone from your own backyard.

Cathy Wurzer was interviewing Wilfahrt's mother, Lori Wilfahrt. As Wurzer opened her interview, she described him as "a gentle soul" who "loved classical music." Call me cynical or just a really savvy homosexual media observer, but I thought to myself: "That sounds like code for gay." Ears pricked, I continued to listen. Then, about halfway through the interview, my hunch was confirmed. Wurzer said, "He was also gay." This guy from Minnesota who was killed in Afghanistan was gay.

Wurzer went on to ask Wilfahrt how much



her son's being gay concerned her when she learned he would enter the military.

Wilfahrt replied, "It did a lot. I think it concerned him as well. He spent a lot of time thinking about it, and he came to terms with it. He knew he would have to go back in the closet, and would have to keep that to himself. And he did, for at least part of his stay in the Army. But when I talked to him [or when he wrote maybe] when he was in Afghanistan, he said, 'Nobody cares.' He said, 'Everybody knows. Nobody cares.' He said, 'Even the really conservative, religious types—they didn't care, either.' He said, 'It's about something else.'"

As I stood there listening, toothpaste now drying on my face, I thought to myself, "Wow. This is a big story. Here's very likely the first known gay soldier from Minnesota killed in action in Afghanistan. It's a story about a brave young man who sacrificed his life in a military that didn't recognize his humanity officially, and for a country that didn't recognize him fully as an equal mem-

ber of society."

When I got to the office later that morning, I decided to dig deeper into the story, and see what else was out there. Very quickly into my Google frenzy, however, I realized that not everyone shared my enthusiasm. Of all the local media to cover Wilfahrt's death, only MPR mentioned he was gay. At the time this column goes to press, MPR is still the only local media to do so. Sad.

Still, in addition to MPR's contribution, CNN, as well as GLBT media outlets, picked up the story, and have been sharing it across the Internet.

Wurzer and MPR should be commended for the interview and coverage. Wilfahrt's story dispels a whole host of stereotypes perpetuated by many outside our community, but some even within it. Gay people aren't the trumped-up threat to unit cohesion that right-wing ideologues would have one believe. And gays are not simply the two-dimensional, materialistic narcissists our own community often would have one believe.

For a community that, so starved for leaders, all too often elevates pseudocelebrities and mediocre pop stars to hero status, Wilfahrt's death was genuinely heroic. It should be commemorated.

Let's honor the life and the sacrifice of Andrew Wilfahrt. Share his story with your friends and family. If you can do more, his family has suggested donations in his honor to OutFront Minnesota, the American Civil Liberties Union, or the Minnesota Armed Services Center. **BRADLEY TRAYNOR**

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LORING THEATER MARKS TAMMY FAYE'S GOLDEN WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

You probably have passed by the historic theater building at 1407 Nicollet Avenue, Minneapolis. In 1920, it opened as a movie and vaudeville house. In the late 1950s, it became the Minneapolis Evangelistic Auditorium. In the 1980s, it was home to Cricket Theatre. In the 1990s, it was rechristened the Music Box Theatre. In 2008, the comedy smash *Triple Espresso* ended its amazing 12-year run there.

Director/producer Steve Barberio has revitalized the space by returning to its roots, as well as its original name, the Loring Theater. He honors its beginnings, while tapping in to present-day reality.

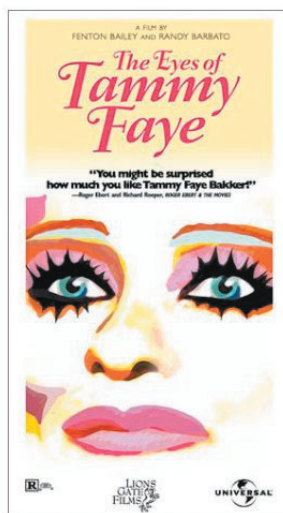
When the establishment first opened, it featured silent films and vaudeville. In those days, folks flocked to these live comedy acts in the same way we go to the movies today.

The new Loring offers a contemporary equivalent that gives local performers and producers a splendid historical venue.

Barberio shares, "We're offering an eclectic mix of entertainment to a broad range of audiences. We see ourselves as a modern-day variety house, which means we are presenting theater, cinema, music, and dance events in a fresh and modern way."

The Mimosa Movies film series on Sundays screens a wide range of "oldies but goodies" like *Sixteen Candles* and *Casablanca*. Live performances include the terrific *7-Shot Symphony*, by the innovative theater troupe Live Action Set, whose co-artistic director, Noah Bremer, calls the space "large, but intimate."

On April 1, the Loring Theater is hosting a special event, *Where Tammy Tied The Knot*. It refers to the legendary Tammy Faye Bakker, née Tamara Faye LaValley in 1942 in International Falls, Minnesota. Her marriage to Jim Bakker capitalized on their popular TV show, *The PTL Club*. PTL is an



acronym for "Praise the Lord," but it came to be known as "Pass the Loot." Things fell apart when he was tried, convicted, and imprisoned for fraud involving the evangelical theme park Heritage USA. The couple divorced in 1992, and she married Roe Messner in 1993. She died in 2007 after an 11-year battle with lung cancer.

While attending North Central Bible College in Minneapolis, and working at a Minneapolis beauty parlor, LaValley met her fellow student and future adulterous husband, the ambitious Bakker. On April 1, 1961, they were married in the basement prayer room of the Minneapolis Evangelistic Auditorium.

This year, on April Fools' Day, the Loring Theater is celebrating the couple's Golden Wedding Anniversary right onsite. You can take a trip down actual memory lane, as the Loring recreates the ambience of 1961 and two Bible college students in love.

Loring Public Relations Director Paul Anderton calls the event "an affectionate

celebration of Tammy Faye's character. It's clear that Tammy's openheartedness and uncontainable sense of fun made her popular with the gay community. April 1 will be full of surprises."

Things get under way with 7:30 PM screening of the acclaimed cult classic documentary *The Eyes of Tammy Faye* (2000), narrated by RuPaul. It reveals that she was not the bigot that so many other evangelical Christians of her heyday were. In fact, she was tearfully sympathetic to people with AIDS, which was quite gutsy in the Reagan Era, when the stigma of the disease was especially severe. She aimed toward the notion of unconditional love, quite unlike her televangelist contemporaries, Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson.

A panel discussion called Tammy Talk follows at 9 PM. And a 1960s Wedding Reception and Bouquet Toss from the balcony caps it all off at 9:30 PM.

1960s wedding attire is recommended. You can get a 20 percent discount at Via's Vintage Wear in Uptown Minneapolis just by mentioning Tammy Faye's name.

Lavender's very own Wanda Wisdom, who will give the wedding toast, says, "Wanda's hair will be higher and eye makeup thicker than ever in honor of the lady that inspired drag queens all over the world. I've got some big lashes to fill, but I can't wait to help celebrate the life of a truly remarkable lady. Tammy Faye was a larger-than-life diva and icon, but also just a humble hometown girl with a warm heart." **JOHN TOWNSEND**

Where Tammy Tied The Knot

Apr. 1
Loring Theater
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(612) 353-6781
www.loringtheater.com

2010-2011

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Featuring choreography by New York City-based Leichter and a commissioned score by infamous club performer Black with added musical selections, *THE WHIZ: MONEYAPOLIS* is a full-spectrum original theatrical extravaganza of song and dance inspired by the movie musical, *The Wiz*.

Delivering a little taste of everything including funk, postmodern, cabaret, hip-hop, drag, house, and psychedelic, Nicholas Leichter Dance traverses a landscape filled with hopes, dreams, fears, and home.

Northrop Concerts and Lectures is a fiscal year 2010 recipient of an Arts Access grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board. This performance is funded, in part, by the Minnesota arts and cultural heritage fund as appropriated by the Minnesota State Legislature with money from the vote of the people of Minnesota on November 4, 2008.

The 10-11 Northrop Season is presented with special support from Project Success.

Presented with support from Bedlam Theatre, the U of M Office for Equity and Diversity, and the U of M GLBTA Programs Office.

[612-624-2345] [northrop.umn.edu]

Photo © Andrew Smrz

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LAVENDER

Changes in Store for Bingo A-GoGo

Interviews with Lee Haugee, Jeff Heine, and Shannon Regan

Come April 9, some big changes will take place, as Clare Housing passes the Bingo A-GoGo scepter—make that dauber—to the Twin Cities Gay Men's Chorus (TCGMC), now celebrating its 30th Anniversary.

Bingo Babe Lee Haugee, TCGMC Executive Director Jeff Heine, and Bingo Babe Shannon Regan recently spoke with *Lavender* concerning this tectonic shift.

INTERVIEW WITH LEE HAUGEE

Would you fill us in on the change?

After almost a decade of presenting Bingo A-GoGo, Clare Housing is turning over the reins to the Twin Cities Gay Men's Chorus. In the fall, Park House and the chorus will present Bingo A-GoGo. Clare Housing will now be diversifying our fundraising efforts to support our rapid growth in affordable housing and supportive services to people who are at risk of homelessness and living with HIV/AIDS.

What will become of the Bingo Babes?

I will continue with my Bingo Babe role through Beauty Pageant Bingo on April 9, and then help with training and a smooth transition for the chorus. Shannon Regan, the other Bingo Babe, will still proudly wear the title, and will no doubt add a Bingo Boy from the chorus.

Will you be staying with Clare Housing? If not, what are your plans for the future?

I will retire in June. However, this will not be the last that people see of me. I am so excited to actually be able to *play* bingo in the fall! More importantly, Clare Housing and the wonderful residents we serve are so important to me. My work in this arena has changed the way I look at my life in relationship to others. I am looking forward to volunteering with Clare Housing by cooking dinner at our care homes on a regular schedule.



Lee Haugee (right) and Shannon Regan. Photo by Sophia Hantzes

INTERVIEW WITH JEFF HEINE

How do you and the chorus you feel about this new challenge?

I am of the firm belief that you don't fix what works, and Bingo A-GoGo works. However, each one has its own theme, and there is an opportunity to reinvent Bingo A-GoGo with each event. I think what you can expect from the chorus is a continued involvement. Several chorus members already volunteer, and help Park House with this and other events. You will see a larger involvement from the members of the chorus. Maybe even some music-related themes will show up in the future. That's what is exciting for me right now—all of the possibilities for continuing to make Bingo A-GoGo a successful event!

INTERVIEW WITH SHANNON REGAN

What is your Babe's-eye view of the new Bingo A-GoGo?

When Park House found out a few months ago that Clare Housing would be adopting a new model of fundraising, we needed to start searching for another partner. This was not an easy decision. For the last nine years, Lee and I were known as the Bingo Babes, and the thought of finding another Bingo Babe that could fill Lee's shoes was unthinkable. Where would we even start? The more I thought about it, the Twin Cities Gay Men's Chorus kept popping into my

mind. Park House and the chorus have had a wonderful 11-year history working together. It just sounded like an incredible opportunity to work together again, and to bring our respective friends and supports together to celebrate all that we do.

How do you see Bingo A-GoGo's future?

In the past 26 Bingo events, we have all stood and raised our daubers in the air, as Miss Richfield took us through the Bingo oath, stating, "I solemnly swear that I am here to raise money for people living with HIV/AIDS." This will not change. We are still raising money towards this effort, but we are adding to it. The Twin Cities Gay Men's Chorus helps fight discrimination through its work and mission. Basically, things will remain the same—it will still be that wacky game of Bingo.

Would you share a few last words?

Park House would like to thank Clare Housing, and especially Bingo Babe Lee Haugee for her dedication these last nine years. I have never worked with anyone who is so dedicated to her task. We would also like to recognize all the volunteers—without them, these many years of successful events would never have taken place. We look forward to our new partnership with the chorus, but we will never forget where we came from, and who helped us get there. Lee, you will always be Bingo Babe #1. Thank you, my friend, for nine wonderful years. *My God, Lee, it's taking 143 gay men to replace you!*

E.B. BOATNER

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www.bingoagogo.com

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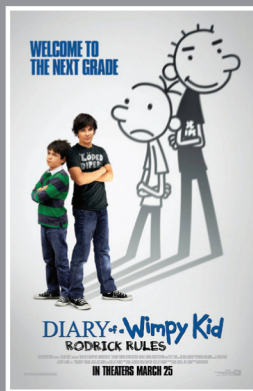


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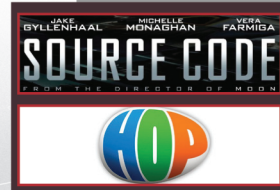
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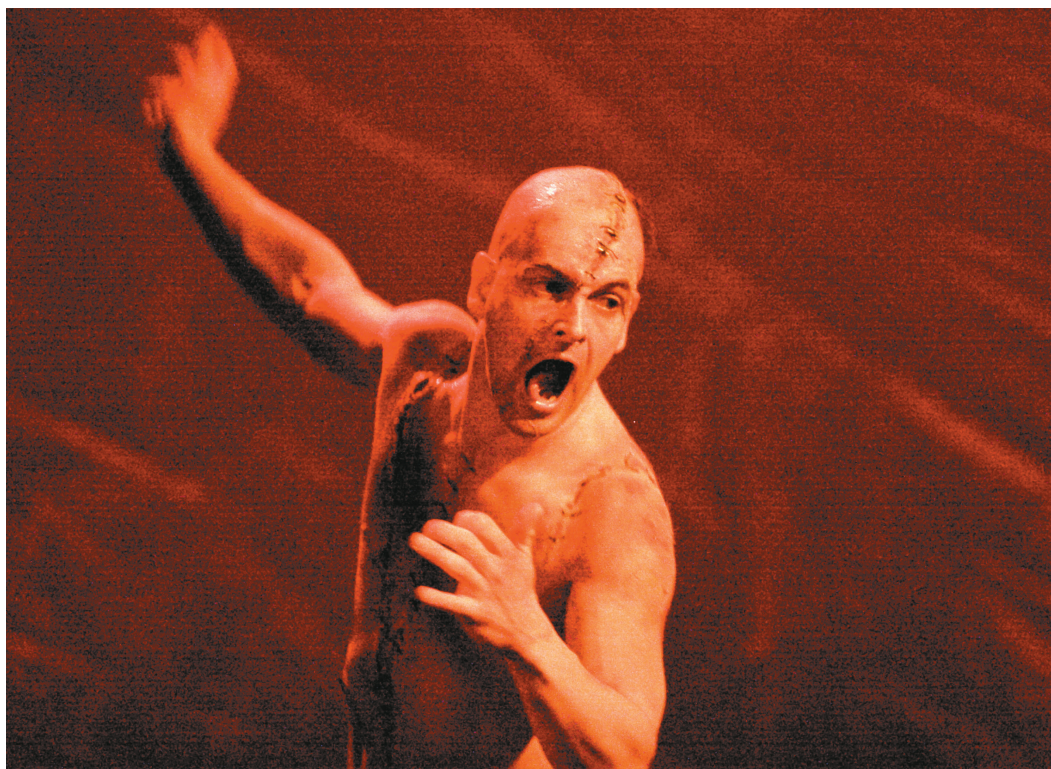
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Frankenstein. Photo by Catherine Ashmore

Frankenstein • Apr. 3 • Guthrie Theater • 818 S. 2nd St., Mpls. • (612) 377-2224 • www.guthrietheater.org

Film director Danny Boyle gave us the Oscar-laden *Slumdog Millionaire* and Best Picture Oscar-nominated *127 Hours*. After a 15-year absence from the stage, he has rocked London with his National Theater mounting of Nick Dear's adaptation of Mary Shelley's horror classic, *Frankenstein*. It stars Benedict Cumberbatch, from Boyle's 1996 film cult classic, *Trainspotting*. See *Frankenstein* in high definition at the Guthrie.

Barrio Grrrl!

Through Mar. 27

Children's Theatre Company
2400 3rd Ave. S., Mpls.
(612) 874-0400
www.childrenstheatre.org

Playwright-lyricist Quiara Alegria Hudes has accomplished a theatrical miracle with help from composer Bill Sherman. This sweet little rock musical from The Kennedy Center for Young Audiences on Tour is relentlessly cheery, yet it never evades dark realities.

A spirit, played zestfully by Michelle Liu Coughlin, gives psychic support to Ana (a vibrant Desiree Rodriguez), whose overworked,

overwhelmed grandfather looks after her, while her mother fights in Iraq.

Hudes demonstrates how, in the face of poverty, thwarted hopes, and categorical adult thinking, a childlike imagination can spur us to new heights and possibilities. We ultimately are reassured that life is beautiful, while knowing the negative is always there to be reckoned with.

Cabaret

Through Mar. 27

Minnesota Centennial Showboat
Harriet Island, St. Paul
(651) 227-1100

www.riverrides.com

Frank Theatre presents this musical's 1998 book version, in which, dramaturg Steve Matuszak says, "all sexuality is out of the closet. And that's only appropriate. Berlin was the only major city in Europe, and perhaps the world, where homosexuality, while technically illegal, was openly embraced. Cliff [Max Wojtanowicz] remains polyamorously bisexual. There are gays, lesbians, threesomes, and hints of S&M scattered throughout the book and our production. The Weimar Republic [in Germany] is a place that's relatively tolerant and adventuresome."

Cabaret goes on to show how the seams of human relationships were ripped, as the country morphed into Nazism. The early-1930s setting reveals the dark passage when Hitler shut down trade unions and all political parties except his own. Then, he went ballistic against Jews, gypsies, and queers.

This production is the most boldly erotic show Wendy Knox ever has directed.

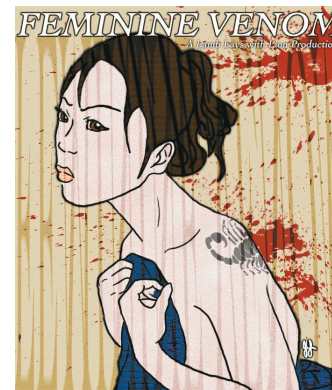
Lucinda Childs's Dance

Apr. 7

Walker Art Center
1750 Hennepin Ave., Mpls.
(612) 375-7600
www.walkerart.org

The 1980s always seem to take a back seat to the 1960s and 1970s as a time for radical artistic innovation. But beneath the Reagan Era's materialistic surface, artistic conventions were challenged radically.

For example, 30 years ago, choreographer Lucinda Childs's *Dance* was derided and adored by its audience. She now reconjures the minimalist style for which this piece is renowned. It also integrates minimalist concepts from Sol LeWitt's visual art and Philip Glass's music.



Feminine Venom. Poster designed by Jenna Lory

Feminine Venom

Mar. 31-Apr. 9

Nick & Eddie's
1612 Harmon Pl., Mpls.
(612) 486-5800
www.lamblayswithlion.org

Edgy director/playwright Jeremy Catterton shares, "I was

fascinated with the *Female Convict Scorpion* films from Japan. Whereas this film genre is often associated with sadomasochism and pornography, I was greatly inspired by how the *Scorpion* films handled 'women behind bars' in a neoexpressionistic way, while also employing character and aesthetics from Kabuki and Noh Theatre."



bare. Photo by Laurie Etchen

bare

Through Apr. 10
Illusion Theater
528 Hennepin Ave., Mpls.
(612) 339-4944
www.aboutmmt.org

Minneapolis Musical Theatre lays bare the souls of five Catholic boarding school students who seek answers to life's questions in the confessional, at raves, and in dorms.

Director Steven Meerdink, who feels the Damon Inrabartolo/John Hartmere musical resonates because of the recent teen-suicide crisis, muses, "We've all wondered if we would be better off keeping a part of ourselves a secret in an effort to fit in. And what accountability does each one of us have for words and actions that might lead others to destructive ends, even if those words and actions seem well-intentioned at the time? *bare* presents these issues in a very powerful way." ➔



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Heaven. Photo by Marc Norberg

Heaven

Through Apr. 10

Guthrie Theater

818 S. 2nd St., Mpls.

(612) 377-2224

www.guthrietheater.org

Battle and genocide are the subject of the latest from choreographer Joe Chvala, who observes, "After years of economic trouble up to the early '90s, and the coinciding wave of political change in Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia began to disintegrate, as Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence. The wars that followed in Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo were the result of a complex combination of history, propaganda, careless political maneuvering, and economics that forced a redrawing of the borders of the former Yugoslavia. The result was years of ethnic cleansing and atrocities not seen in Europe since World War II."

Chan Poling, whose gorgeous score graced the beloved local gay film *The Toilers & The Wayfarers*, has composed music for *Heaven*.

Oedipus El Rey

Through Apr. 27

Lab Theater

700 N. 1st St., Mpls.

(612) 333-7977

www.tetrodelpueblo.org

The US incarceration rate surpasses that of any developed country in the world. This elicits a grim atmosphere for minorities who are targets of a prison system that often is privatized for profit. Such is the world of openly-gay playwright Luis Alfaro's contemporary retelling of Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex* in an LA barrio. This haunting coproduction by Pangea and Teatro del Pueblo beguiles with a ritualistic spirit. ■

LAVENDER'S

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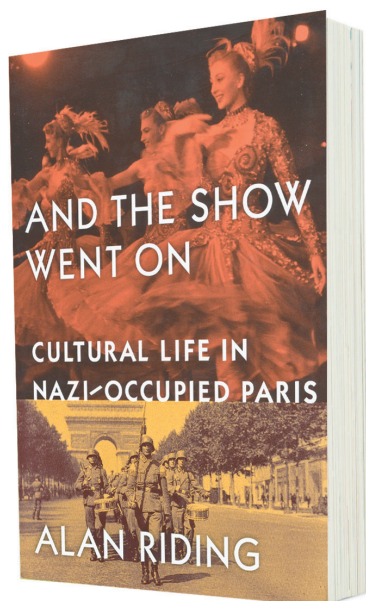
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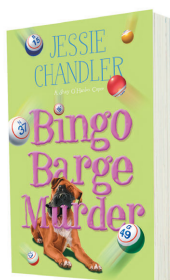
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***And the Show Went On: Cultural Life in Nazi-Occupied Paris* • Alan Riding • Alfred A. Knopf • \$28.95**

During World War II, Paris, unscathed, fell to the Germans on June 14, 1940. By July, cultural venues—theaters, movie houses, cabarets—were up and running, a situation both encouraging and disturbing. The cast of characters includes most anyone known in that era in the realm of French letters, art, music, theater, and film—with a wide spectrum of behavior from total *résistance* to collaboration, and all the grays in-between. This period until the liberation in August 1944 was rich: Picasso remained and painted, and box-office revenues increased by 163 percent. But the appearance of normalcy involved cooperation with the Germans and the removal of Parisian Jews—artists and citizens alike. Riding questions the artists' duty: Were they saving French culture, or merely collaborating? He quotes Britain's Anthony Eden: "If one hasn't been through the horrors of an occupation by a foreign power, you have no right to pronounce upon what a country does which has been through all that."



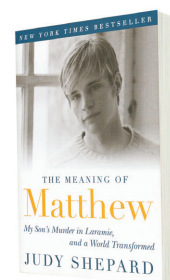
***Bingo Barge Murder: A Shay O'Hanlan Caper* • Jessie Chandler • Midnight Ink Books • \$14.95**

Local author Jessie Chandler launches her first Shay O'Hanlan caper with panache. Shay, owner of The Rabbit Hole, a caffeine-cool Minneapolis coffee café, is plunged into intrigue and mayhem when her childhood friend, Coop, becomes a murder suspect, and begs her protection. Chandler is never at a loss for a quirky name or bizarre venue: Coop is accused of offing Kinky, former boss and owner of the Pig's Eye Bingo Barge, adding insult to murder by doing him in with a bronzed bingo dauber, itself a token of an earlier huge win at the Magical Pond, an Indian gaming casino out west of the Twin Cities. Add to this mix Shay's business partner, Kate; Shay's landlord/mentor, Mad Knitter Eddy; gorgeous Homicide Detective JT Johnson, whose steely eyes and lush lips make Shay's heart go pitter-patter; assorted sociopaths; and an adopted snaggletoothed junkyard dog. Coffee, romance, murder, and dog all make for Minnesota nice-nice.



***Hot Lava* • Rob Rosen • Torquere Press E-book at <www.torquerebooks.com> • \$5.99**

Another fabulous buddy-diva-drag-queen-murder romp from Rob Rosen, who in 2009 brought you *Divas Las Vegas*. Newly-minted protagonists Chase and "Order Me A Drink" Brandon attempt to vacation in Hawaii, but find themselves caught up from the first lei in sex and murder, sex and intrigue, and sex and alcohol—well, you get the picture. Rosen is a veteran writer of erotica for every major US gay publisher, including *Advocate Men* and *Freshmen* magazines, guaranteeing that the steamy scenes—of which the novel has a pleasing number—have been well-researched. The boys do undercover(s) work as their alter-egos, Judy and Liza, to get the goods on lying murdering bad guys, while Chase finds love in the arms of the FBI agent. A young street-hustler, Koni, and Brandon's sister, Briana—a gal with all the jollity of a hanging judge and sleuthing skills to match—round out this fast-paced read for a happy ending (for those left alive).



***The Meaning of Matthew: My Son's Murder in Laramie and a World Transformed* • Judy Shepard • Plume • \$15**

Judy Shepard states unequivocally: "Matt was not our gay son; Matt was our son who happened to be gay." From the moment on October 5, 1998, when she and her husband, Dennis, were awakened by a phone call from a doctor in Laramie, Wyoming, their lives changed forever. Matt had been attacked viciously, sustaining, among other wounds, lethal head injuries. Shepard sets forth his subsequent death and the publicity it garnered worldwide, as she emphasizes that for most of his short life, he was simply her son, a child to be loved and cherished for himself. Through her grief, however, we see how her will is strengthened, as well as her determination to see her son's killers prosecuted and convicted. Shepard first heard of the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) at Matt's memorial service, then attended an HRC dinner, from which she has gone on to use the harrowing experience of her son's murder in the service of others. ■

ARTS

Lavender's Out at the Movies Screens *Children of God*



Poster Courtesy of tla releasing

What a double feature! Start out with Lavender's First Thursday, and continue with Lavender's Out at the Movies. Both take place on April 7 at the stunning ShowPlace Icon Theatre, just off Highway 100 and 394 in St. Louis Park.

Lavender's Out at the Movies screens *Children of God* (2009), a critically-acclaimed film by Bahamian writer-director Kareem Mortimer. Its theme is rampant homophobia in Caribbean society.

In the film, the fates of three very different individuals converge on the Bahamian island of Eleuthera. Johnny (Johnny Ferro), a white Bahamian art student, violently is abused by black Bahamians. He has an unexpected romance with Romeo (Stephen Tyrone Williams), a black Bahamian man. Meanwhile, Lena (Margaret Laurena Kemp), the homophobic, deeply-religious wife of a virulently antigay pastor who secretly has sex with men, finds her marriage unraveling.

This remarkable film will shock you to the very core with its startling conclusion.

Lavender's First Thursday

Apr. 7
5:30-8 PM

Lavender's Out at the Movies

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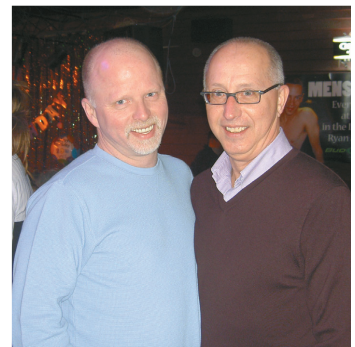


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March 11

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TNT Show • Sat., Apr. 9
Cheapie Nights • Fri., Mar. 25 & Fri., Apr. 1

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"Fairytale Costume Ball" Dinner & Show
 Hosted By
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 Empress XIX, Roxie Hart
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BAR CALENDAR

For club addresses, phone numbers, and websites, see "Out on the Town Advertiser Guide" on page 42. For events not at bars, see <LaverMagazine.com/calendar>.



SATURDAY, MARCH 26

Fairytale Costume Ball: Emperor & Empress Ball

Imperial Court of Minnesota Benefit for
 Rural AIDS Action Network (RANN)
 5 PM. Gay 90's.

Elegance

9 PM. Town House.

SATURDAY, APRIL 2

Lip Service

9 PM. Town House.

FRIDAY, APRIL 8

YOLO

9 PM. Town House.

SATURDAY, APRIL 9

Twin Cities Gay Pool League Year-End Tournament

Noon. Town House.

TNT Show

9 PM. Town House. ■



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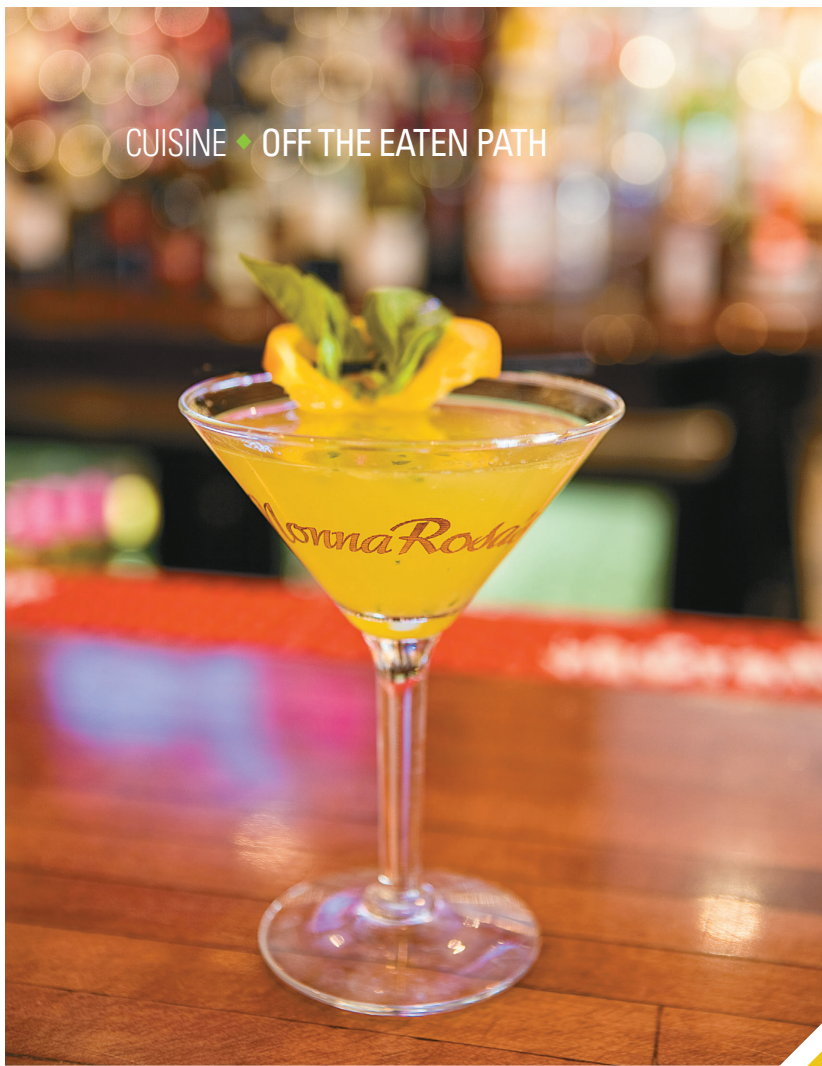

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NONNA ROSA'S

You're Really Family At This Neighborhood Hit

The Olive Garden's slogan—"When you're here, you're family"—always has bothered me. When I'm there, I feel like I'm part of a large corporate machine that muscles out its competition, and keeps prices low by dealing with agricultural conglomerates. If that feels like "family" to you, then you either watched way too much *Dynasty*, or you're more screwed up than I am.

For the real family-restaurant experience, look instead to Nonna Rosa's. Like so many establishments that touch the soul, it's run by a husband-and-wife team: Chef Francesco Suglia, who grew up in Southeast Italy, was captivated by the region's ingredients and his family's traditional cooking; and Manager Tina Suglia's family was in the restaurant business in the Twin Cities. The two met and fell in love, then shared a vision of opening up a place in a close-knit community—something that would remind him of home.

They selected Robbinsdale, but it almost didn't happen that way. Another business was vying for their chosen space (formerly Thistles), but the community fought hard to bring Nonna Rosa's home. The neighborhood's early devotion took Tina Suglia a bit by surprise, and the relationship between restaurant and community only has grown closer. In fact, one patron recently presented her with a cheery scrapbook featuring page

upon page of happy customers enjoying special events there.

You get the feeling it has been a Robbinsdale fixture for 20 years, but in reality, Nonna Rosa's (full name: La Cucina Di Nonna Rosa's Ristorante Italiano) opened just 10 months ago.

It's a small space, and despite the harsh white ceiling, manages to feel cozy and intimate. It's not fussy, but little details, down

to our server's proper pronunciation of the menu, are not overlooked.

The wine list is broad and suitably Italy-centric, while the signature martinis are playful and festive. A pulpy, refreshing Orange Basil Martini is an early sign of spring. The Good 'n Plenty Martini could be a bit weighty for some, but in mimicking its namesake candy, the hint of licorice helps mitigate its sweetness. ➡

(Clockwise from upper left) Orange Basil Martini; cofounders Tina Suglia and Chef Francesco Suglia; Risotto Mediterraneo; dining area. Photos by Hubert Bonnet



(From left) Chef Francesco Suglia checking breads; Funghi Ripieni; Espresso Martini.

When I'm on my own, I typically wait until a kitchen has earned my trust before I order either calamari (because it is my favorite, and I hate to see good squid ruined) or stuffed mushrooms (because it *can* be my not-so-favorite, unless handled expertly).

However, our server urged us to order both the Fritto Misto, fried calamari, shrimp, and marinated artichokes with roasted red pepper aioli (\$8.99); and the Funghi Ripieni, mushrooms stuffed with a risotto meatball mixture and cheeses, served with toast (\$7.99). When I am on the clock, I promise my readers to go boldly forth into the unknown no matter what the consequences. I'm very glad I did here, as both were spectacular. The Fritto Misto was delicate, crisp, flavorful, and not at all greasy. As for the Fungi Ripieni, the addition of risotto did wonders for the dish's texture, and both meatball and mushroom mingled into a husky, forest-floor bliss.

After a light, palate-cleansing sip of Nona's Bellini—prosecco, spiked with peach and raspberry—we moved on to the meaty

Gnocchi Bolognese (\$15.99) and the seaworthy Risotto Mediterraneo (\$17.99). The two dishes were mild, and I did miss a little bit of kick. However, I respect the kitchen for keeping its loyal customers happy and comfortable. Tina Suglia assured me the chef would be happy to spice up dishes at the request of his diners. Even in their mild versions, both dishes were inviting. Gnocchi is comfort food at its best. The risotto was liberal with its mussels, shrimp, scallops, calamari, and a bit of a surprise—salmon.

Both the Vitello Piccata—veal medallions with capers and a luscious lemon cream sauce, served with sides of potato and vegetables (\$19.99)—and the delectable Maialino Mediterraneo—pork tenderloin with feta cream sauce, wickedly good Kalamata olives, and mushrooms (\$15.99)—were definitely more assertive. With them, we enjoyed one of Nonna Rosa's moderately priced bottles of wine—the food-friendly yet sufficiently-full-bodied Poggio Morino (\$30).

Dessert was Canoli, which was fantas-

tic. If you wish, enjoy it with a bittersweet Espresso Martini, or try a traditional Italian digestif: Lemoncello Crème, or Averna—a Sicilian herbal liqueur known for settling the stomach.

Additionally, Italian-themed movie nights, half-price wine bottles Sundays and Mondays, a respectable happy hour, and patio seating make this restaurant easy to love.

It may not have all the frippery of a Downtown food-tainment establishment, but if you're like me, sometimes, you just want to have a good meal at a reasonable price, and enjoy the company you're with. That's Nonna Rosa's. They'll welcome you with open arms, stuff you with food and too much wine, and proudly tell you about everything they love. And *that* feels like family. **HEIDI FELLNER**

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Suffer For It

I hear it's not smart to have a television in your bedroom, but I do. I turn it on when I'm nursing a hangover.

The TV usually is muted, and on a Sunday news show. I lay there in the glow of silent Sunday pundits, wondering what they're saying. I wonder about stupid things, like how early they have to get up, and if they ever go out on Saturday nights.

It's also the only time I read that scrolling news ticker at the bottom of the screen.

I wonder why the television always casts a blue glow, even if nothing blue is on the screen.

I wonder why I had so much vodka.

I wonder why I gave that one guy my number.

Did I close my tab? My jeans are on the floor next to my bed. I could just check for my credit card, but I don't. It's easier to think about it.

Today, I'm going to text-message my friends to piece together the night before. I'm going to eat mac and cheese, and drink *regular* Coke.

I'll think about the boys I really wish would like me, but who I never ask. No matter what their response is, I don't want to hear it. It's easier just to see them occasionally, and pretend I'm too unapproachable. I'm terribly bashful. Wince.

Arianna Huffington's face is huge on the TV. I wish the sound was on. I like her voice.

I force myself up to brush my teeth. In the bathroom mirror, I see the PJs everyone makes fun of me for. They're giant Christmas "Ho Ho Ho" pants I wear all year long. Some people sleep in their underwear or just a shirt. I sleep in my oversized Christmas PJ bottoms.

I'm dehydrated. I like the way that looks in the mirror—like an instant four pounds of water weight vanished overnight.

If I had a boyfriend, I would want him to see me like this, except with my hair done. I'd style my hair for him right then and there, just so I could show him the full pack-



WHEN THE TEXTING IS EXHAUSTED, THINGS FEEL LONELY. IT'S THE MOMENT WHEN YOU REALIZE THAT YOU'VE GOT GREAT FRIENDS, BUT YOU DON'T HAVE HIM.

age. He'd want to wrap his arms around my waist, I fantasize.

I walk back into my bedroom, and look at the place where he would be, but isn't. Because I'm too picky, maybe. Or because everyone else is just picky enough.

So goes the Sunday morning routine that I maybe should be more embarrassed about, but I'm not. If something embarrasses me, I stop doing it.

While real grown-ups are doing responsible things like running errands and working out, I'm holed-up in the cool dark of my apartment, exchanging sarcastic texts with my friends about how hungover we are, and how responsible that makes us. We say things—like that we'll never drink again. It makes us laugh.

When the texting is exhausted, things feel lonely. It's the moment when you realize that you've got great friends, but you don't have *him*. Damn. It always goes back to that.

Did you miss meeting him because you were too drunk? You're hurting for a reason, you know. Or maybe it's because everyone else can see through that unapproachable veneer, and it actually looks rather sad.

It's the hangover magnifying otherwise passing thoughts. The hangover makes everything more emotional, more important.

So many ups and downs. So many what-ifs and whys. So many reflections, self-pities, and promises that next time will be different. The night will be just as fun, but with less pretention. Maybe that will welcome him in.

The hangover makes us suffer for the memories we made, the blurry judgments we reasoned, the poignancy of sometimes-painful solitude. It fills in for Mom by punishing us for acting stupid. It's one of those gross things that's just common enough, though, to continue doing.

The night before was so much fun. Nothing embarrassing happened, and a few new friends were made. You will understand this when the hangover washes away, but while it's there, you have nothing else to do.

They say that alcohol brings out the truth in us. People take this to mean that we're at our most candid when we're drunk. I think it's the aftermath, though, when we are most honest with ourselves. Thoughts scroll from the fun to the sappy, always in the extreme, teetering on that stinging headache and upset stomach.

It's like reading that damn little news ticker scrolling beneath Arianna Huffington's face—it tells the truth about what's going on in the world, while talking heads spout out only their opinions.

The hangover mutes the noise, and reminds us, like that quiet informer, about what's really going on.

Maybe it's our age that lets us fall out of focus. To be honest with ourselves, some of us, sometimes, suffer for it. **JUSTIN JONES**

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Photos by Garrett Manzi



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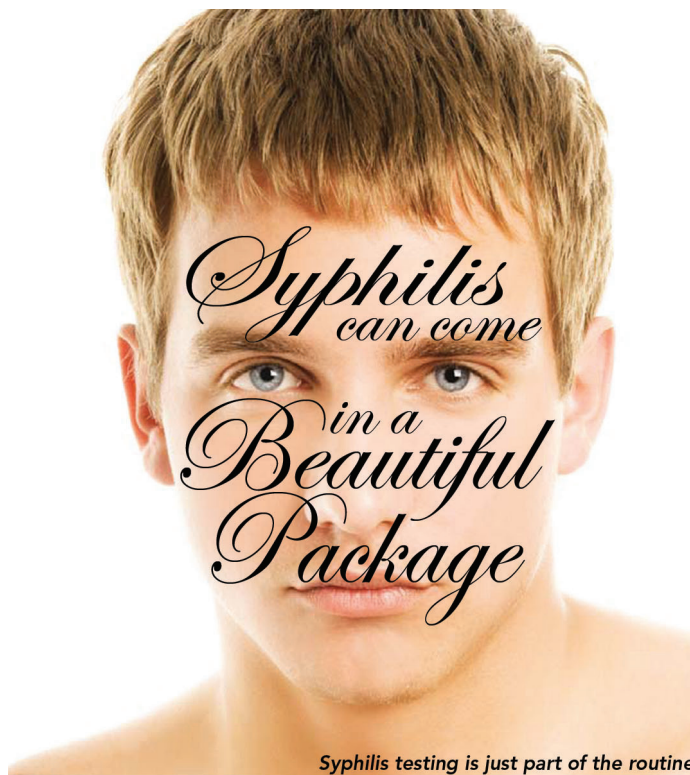


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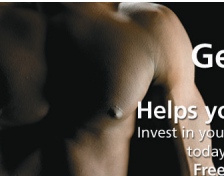
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CALENDAR

MARCH-APRIL

25

Friday, March



Avenue Q. Photo by Rich Ryan

Avenue Q. After a six-year Broadway run, worldwide tours, and a year in Las Vegas, *Avenue Q* takes on a whole new vantage when Mixed Blood stages the Tony Award-winning show in its intimate theater. It's the coming-of-age story of Princeton (Tom Reed), an earnest, optimistic liberal arts college grad. When he ventures to the Big Apple with only his hopes and dreams, he gets an apartment on Avenue Q, which is about all he can afford. Just like in the real world, he and his neighbors struggle to find jobs, dates, and their ever-elusive purpose in life. Jack Reuler, Mixed Blood Artistic Director, directs this bodacious new production. Through May 1. Mixed Blood Theatre, 1501 S. 4th St., Mpls. (612) 338-6131. <www.mixedbloodtheatre.com>.

31

Thursday, March

The Laramie Project. Tartan Theatre presents *The Laramie Project*, by Moisés Kaufman and the members of Tectonic Theater Project. It's a thought-provoking,

critically-acclaimed, and emotionally-riveting theater experience of a small town at the epicenter of an incomprehensible crime. The play, which is the story of and the reaction to the 1998 murder of Matthew Shepard, follows a group of people and their interviews with the citizens of Laramie beginning one month after the murder and throughout the following year, up to the murder trials of Shepard's killers. Through Apr. 3. Arlie M. Knutson Auditorium, Tartan High School, 828 Greenway Ave. N., Oakdale. (651) 702-8814. <www.tartantheatre.org>.

1

Friday, April

Olé! Olé! Olé! The rhythm is gonna getcha! Feel the heat, and move your feet to the Latin beat, as the Twin Cities Gay Men's Chorus (TCGMC) melts away the winter doldrums, and whisks you away on a journey to Latin and South America. This concert explores timeless Latin classics by Ernani Aguiar and Heitor Villa-Lobos; bossa nova rhythms of Antonio Carlos Jobim; and contemporary music of Santana and Gloria Estefan. It spotlights some of Latin America's wondrous legends, like La Llorona; adds a touch of heat with the sensuous rhythms of the conga and tango; and features the heart-pounding music of Marc Anthony and Ricky Martin. You won't be able to keep still, as the men of the chorus thrill you in the visually-stunning and aurally-thrilling *Olé! Olé! Olé!* Ballet Folklórico México Azteca and Mariachi Mi Tierra will be performing with the chorus for both performances. Community initiative: TCGMC encourages you to bring personal care items for women and children at Casa de Esperanza's refugio (shelter). Apr. 1-2. Ted Mann Concert Hall, Univ. of Minn., 2128 S. 4th St., Mpls. (612) 624-2345. <www.tcgmc.org>.

To Kill a Mockingbird. This new, ambitious staging, directed by David Mann, appears on Park Square's stage for the first time. The adaptation by Christopher Sergel includes a gospel chorus, and an evocative set designed by Joel Sass suggesting small-town life in 1935 Alabama. *To Kill a Mockingbird*, a definitive American classic by Harper Lee first published 50 years ago, won the Pulitzer Prize in 1961. The play's hero, Atticus Finch, serves as an iconic inspiration for tolerance and integrity in the

face of adversity. His 8-year-old daughter, Scout, remains among the most-beloved young characters in literature, with her pluck, smarts, and willingness to understand the perspectives of others. Through Apr. 17. Park Square Theatre, 20 W. 7th Pl., St. Paul. (651) 291-7005. <www.park-squaretheatre.org>.



To Kill a Mockingbird. Photo by Gary Anderson

ONGOING

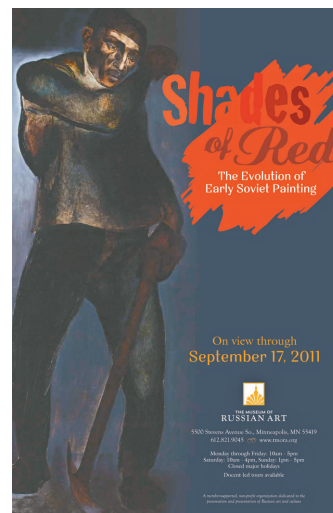
Broke-ology. Directed by James A. Williams, this play is the story of the King family, who have survived the hardships of life with their love intact. Now, sons Malcolm and Ennis find themselves increasingly in conflict over the care of their ailing father. This portrait of an African-American family caught between the future they dreamed and the present they have is a powerfully universal American drama told with uncommon affection, honesty, and humor. Through Apr. 10. Pillsbury House Theatre, 3501 Chicago Ave. S., Mpls. (612) 825-0459. <www.pillsburyhousetheatre.org>.

Dinner with the Tsars: Imperial Russian Porcelain. This exhibition brings together approximately 140 superb examples of Russian porcelain wares produced at the Imperial Porcelain Factory in St. Petersburg during the rule of the Romanovs. The beautifully-crafted, hand-painted objects present visitors with examples of inspired decorative settings and tableware used by the sovereigns and guests of the House of Romanov. Through Aug. 7. The Museum of Russian Art, 5500 Stevens Ave. S., Mpls. (612) 821-9045. <www.tmora.org>.

Hamlet. One of the most powerful and influential tragedies in the English language, William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* returns to the arena at Theatre in the Round Players. The royal court is overwhelmed by grief, hauntings, real and feigned madness, violence, and treachery, as Prince Hamlet seeks revenge for his murdered father. Matt Sciple directs Clarence Wethern in the title role and a cast of 14. Features an original score by Don Sweet. Audience dis-

cussion follows the Mar. 27 performance. Through Apr. 17. Theatre in the Round, 245 Cedar Ave., Mpls. (612) 333-3010. <www.TheatreintheRound.org>.

The Marvelous Wondrettes. This cotton candy-colored nonstop pop musical features the iconic sounds of the '50s and '60s. In a journey back to the 1958 Springfield High School Prom, the Wondrettes—Betty Jean, Cindy Lou, Missy, and Suzy—are four young girls with hopes and dreams as big as their crinoline skirts. It's brimming with such classic hits as "Lollipop," "Dream Lover," "Lipstick On Your Collar," and many more. Throughout, we learn about their lives and loves. Through July 24. Plymouth Playhouse, 2705 Annapolis Ln. N., Plymouth. (763) 553-1600. <www.plymouthplayhouse.com>.



Shades of Red. Courtesy of The Museum of Russian Art

Shades of Red: The Evolution of Early Soviet Painting. The title of The Museum of Russian Art's newest exhibition is an allegorical reference to the historical conditions prevailing in postrevolutionary Russia between 1920 and the late 1930s. The art of this period reflected a wide range of revolutionary idealism (i.e., "redness"). This exhibition of 62 paintings from a variety of private collections illustrates how the entire spectrum of socialist cultural goals was interpreted by Soviet artists of the time. It centers on a transitional period that seldom, if ever, has been addressed in any depth. Through Sept. 17. The Museum of Russian Art, 5500 Stevens Ave. S., Mpls. (612) 821-9045. <www.tmora.org>.

For additional calendar events, visit <www.LavenderMagazine.com>.

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Heart Growing Fonder

My girlfriend just returned from a week-long business trip. I was so happy to see her that I hugged her hard, and exclaimed: "You really need to leave home more often."

OK, maybe that wasn't the best way to phrase it. She obviously thought I could have handled her return differently, because I then was forced to spend the next hour explaining to her what I meant.

Although I may not act like an adult, I am defined as one in terms of years and experience. As an adult, I often find the constant presence of another adult irritating.

I like to make my own decisions. I don't like to be told what to eat, what to wear, how to drive, who to hang out with, when to go to bed, how much to drink...well, you get the picture. I like to do whatever the hell I want, whenever I want, and to drink as much as I want while doing it.

So, romantic relationships aren't very easy for me. I like the sex part, but I struggle with the "you-now-must-consult-another-human-before-making-any-decision" stuff.

My first reaction to any suggestion about my day-to-day life is "No." It doesn't matter if the suggestion actually would make my life better or easier—the initial response is always "No."

At first, this caused terrible problems with my girlfriend. She'd make what she considered to be a helpful suggestion—e.g., that I not eat cookies before dinner, or that I wear a hat on a below-zero day—and I'd respond by eating the cookies, and not wearing the hat.

This would result in stupendous fights, with her demanding that I explain my irrationality, and me sputtering about oppression and evoking names of great, rugged individualists, but only succeeding in sounding like a stubborn jerk.

Instead of walking out of the relationship (which I'm sure she has lived to regret), she decided to change tactics. She started using reverse psychology. Now, when she wants me to do something, she'll suggest the opposite. Because I'm not very bright, this method works beautifully.

Recently, though, she has become very busy at work, and has not had the energy to manipulate me. She has returned to making "helpful" suggestions, and I've resumed being a resentful baby.

Then, she told me she was leaving for a week. I was delighted! "I'll show her!" I proclaimed, as she pulled out of the driveway. "I can get along just fine without her."

That night, as she predicted, I didn't bother to make dinner for myself, nor did I microwave the meals she thoughtfully had prepared for me. Instead, I ate a hunk of cheese, and drank a bottle of wine.

I watched a marathon of the reality TV shows she routinely deletes with disgust from the DVR, and then, I passed out on the couch. I woke in the middle of the night, shivering, and wondering why no one had covered me with a blanket. My stomach and my head hurt.

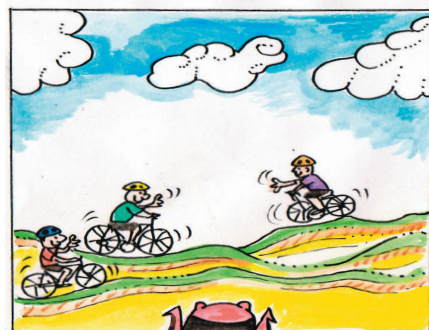
Things went downhill from there. I forgot to set the alarm. I forgot to brush my hair. I forgot to feed the dogs.

I woke up every morning at 3 AM with the sinking feeling that I had lost something. It took several days to realize exactly what I had lost, or, rather, what I had found—someone who cares about me more than I do about myself.

So, when she got home, I was thrilled to see her. And then, I told her to go away more often, because, like most adults, I know that people don't change. I soon would be taking her for granted again. And it would be in the best interest of both of us if she occasionally reminds me of how lucky I am. **JENNIFER PARELLO**

TROLIN, UN DIABLITO ROSA

por RODRO



Cyclists are always happy.



They have happy, delightful faces. I'm going to try riding a bike.



There's a reason behind everything. Even happiness.

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The Iceman Cometh

Scientists named him Iceman because he was frozen to death 5,300 years ago, and entombed by a glacier. They also chose that name because of a hunch that calling him Vanilla Ice or Ice Cube would seem flippant, and make it tougher to get their mitts on a huge research grant.

Now, more than two decades after German hikers discovered the thawing body in the Alps—because of the odor, they thought they had stumbled upon a bachelor's refrigerator—leading forensic experts believe they know how Iceman died. They said in a report that because of a fractured jaw and broken ribs, he was likely beaten by rivals before crawling off to die.

The lone dissenter was the representative from the highly-respected Los Angeles Coroner's Office, who is of the strong opinion that the injuries can point to only two possible scenarios: the 5,300-year-old man was either thrown from a lime-colored Plymouth Duster during a drug deal gone bad, or he fell down an escalator.

The revelations came in Chicago during the annual meeting of the Radiological Society of North America. The forensic experts chose Chicago because, well, it's got the best damn pizza in the world, and the hot dogs come with a pickle spear—that's why!

The Stone Age corpse was examined with high-tech CAT scans and X-ray technology, which revealed many serious injuries, including the broken ribs and jaw on the man's 5'3" frame.

And scientists said even more sophisticated equipment was used to determine if the Iceman's feelings may have been hurt by the merciless teasing of classmates about his height.



"Because he has a lot of injuries, one could speculate that he was trying to escape from some human trauma," a forensic radiologist from Houston said.

When asked whether one could also speculate that several thousand tons of shifting ice resting atop the man's body for more than 5,000 years could possibly have caused any of the damage, the forensic experts responded with great anger.

"Yeah, sure," a spokesman said. "And won't that sell a lot of books or a screenplay? Jerk!"

I hear Charlie Sheen is available to play the role, but personally, I think that because of his physical stature, Tom Cruise is better-suited for the part.

While scientists have not positively determined his origins, most believe he is an example of Early Italian Man. This is because of the position of his hands at the time of death, which indicate that he was moving them rapidly back-and-forth and up-and-down in great

gestures—as though he was talking.

Studies show that the man had dark hair and a beard, and that he probably wouldn't have looked very exceptional at all if he were alive today and walking down the street in European clothing.

Even the 5,300-year-old man's smell would not make him stand out in a crowd of European men, according to a joke from some incredibly insensitive person I refuse to identify.

OK. It was Jay Leno.

Studies also report that Iceman's death followed a "personal disaster with a departure in full flight."

For those of you not familiar with scientific writings, what that means is some horrible bully smacked Iceman over the head, and then, Iceman ran away screaming. Tsk. That poor little hairy Stone Age Sissy.

These experts also claim their tests have shown that the Iceman had—honest—cholesterol problems. This likely came from consuming red meat. And as we all know, eating it from a living, thrashing animal can really play havoc with the cholesterol.

They say that Iceman's colon remains intact, and may still have remnants of food in it. Sheesh. I can't wait for the National Society of Proctologists to give us all the details about that little adventure.

Now, consider the source here, but speaking as a hairy Stone Age Sissy myself, I sincerely hope that after at least 5,300 years, this will be the generation that finally puts an end to bullying.

Support The Trevor Project!

Bye for now.

Kiss, kiss. **JULIE DAFYDD**

Bad Vibrations

Dear Ms. Behavior:

I'm in big trouble, and I need your help. Last week, my old friend, Lillian, who was recovering from a breakup, came to stay with me.

We were lying on my bed just chatting, when Lillian discovered my vibrator under my pillow. She never had used one before, and asked me about it. I explained how it worked, but she didn't seem to get it.

Somehow, Lillian took her pants off, and used the vibrator, while I, in the spirit of helping a downtrodden and sexually-deprived friend, instructed her. Ultimately, she had an orgasm.

My girlfriend was not home at the time. When she got back, she asked me why the vibrator was out. I didn't want to lie, so I told her. She was furious, and told me I had cheated on her.

Ms. Behavior, it never occurred to me

that this was really sex. Lillian and I didn't kiss or touch each other in any way. I will admit that I got a little turned on watching her, but my initial motivation was helping a friend, not my own sexual desire.

So, did I really cheat on my girlfriend? Do you have any guidelines for how to tell whether something counts as sex?

—BUZZ

Dear Buzz:

While you may not have intended to cheat on your girlfriend, encouraging someone through an orgasm probably counts as infidelity (unless you're a certified sex therapist or Ms. Behavior).

Though you are clearly a helpful and well-meaning person, giving remedial vibrator lessons to mechanically-disadvantaged lesbians will not bode well for your relationship with your girlfriend.

Lesbians often feign confusion about which acts count as actual sex. This vagueness occurs partly because heterosexist society prefers to define sex as penis-vagina penetration, which leaves lesbians totally out of the picture.

But lesbians also remain confused because vagueness about which acts constitute sex is titillating. Just ask any lesbian who has managed to reach orgasm with her clothing on.

So, let Ms. Behavior clear it up for you and millions of lesbians throughout the world: Sex is any act that potentially could result in an orgasm for either or any participant.

This means that it doesn't matter whether you're naked or fully-dressed; whether your lover minds; or whether you initially intended to have sex.

Bear in mind, though, that the definition of sex and the definition of fidelity within a particular relationship are not always the

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same thing.

While activities like phone sex or side-by-side masturbation unquestionably are actually sex, some partners don't mind, and others do.

While kissing isn't sex, kissing someone outside the context of a monogamous relationship is often considered cheating (at least by lesbian girlfriends whose partners have kissed other women).

In any case, apologize to your girlfriend for your transgression, and hope that she can forgive your misguided enthusiasm.

While a hands-on approach probably serves you well in most areas of your life, next time a friend comes to you with intimate questions or troubles, try to have a more detached approach.

Ask yourself: "If this were a douche or a tampon, would I get right in there and help, or would I just offer my friend a pamphlet?"

Dear Ms. Behavior:

I'm a 48-year-old man who recently starting dating a 22-year-old. Brad is sweet and cute. He appears to like me, but seems to expect me to pay for things. So far, it has been small things.

Brad suggested going out for pizza last night, and then, when it came time to pay, said he had no money. He also has no car, and expects me to drive him to school.

This feels weird to me. On the other hand, he's very affectionate.

How can I tell if he is using me?

—GARY

Dear Gary:

People successfully "use" each other all the time, even when money is not part of the arrangement.

What's wrong with Brad liking you because you pay for his dinner and make him

feel safe, and you liking him because he's young and pretty?

Ms. Behavior is fairly certain it's not Brad's scintillating conversation skills that keep you engaged. Anyway, you might find that a brief tryst with a cute young thing elevates your mood for a while, as long as you don't expect too much.

Opposing expectations may cause a potential problem. If you want a lifelong partnership, while Brad wants lunch money and an alternative to the school bus, you'll end up feeling used. In that case, you always can make him pack up his X-Box and his joystick, and go home. **MERYL COHN**

© 2011 Meryl Cohn. Address questions and correspondence to <msbehavior@aol.com>. She is the author of Do What I Say: Ms. Behavior's Guide to Gay and Lesbian Etiquette (Houghton Mifflin). Signed copies are available directly from the author.

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